



Network News

Your Arizona Parent School Connection



July 2007

Vol. 15 No. 4

What's New?

by Barb Ross

The Parent Information Network regrets to announce the resignation of one of our senior PIN Specialists, Tina Swearingen. Tina served the Gila and Pinal Counties for over eight years. Tina's commitment to parental involvement in the special education process was magnified in her role as PIN Specialist (PINS). Her PIN Clearinghouse documents have been relied upon by families, educators and advocates throughout Arizona including the Blue Pages, Beyond High School: Military Options, Coping with the Fact Your Child has a Disability, Disability Specific fact sheets, and many more, as well as articles for Network News and numerous training modules. Tina will be greatly missed by her fellow PINS along with the many parents, educators, agencies and organizations she has helped over the years. The Arizona Department of Education, Exceptional Student Services and the Parent Information Network, all wish her the very best in her new endeavors. The interim PIN contact information for Gila and Pinal counties is ADE/ESS: 928-679-8102.

The Fall Transition Conference

by Jana Bays

The Arizona Department of Education, Exceptional Student Services, the Arizona Department of Economic Security, Rehabilitation Services Administration and other sponsoring agencies are pleased to announce that the Seventh Annual Transition Conference, PATHWAYS... will be held on September 17 & 18, 2007 at the Radisson Fort McDowell Resort and Casino in Scottsdale/Fountain Hills, Arizona.

PATHWAYS... promises an exciting agenda that will include national speakers, state level experts, active youth involvement, and a fabulous showcase of student art and entertainment. This is not the year to miss! Who should attend? Individuals with disabilities, family members, parent/student advocates, teachers/professors, secondary special education administrators, or anyone else interested in state of the art information on post-secondary options for students with disabilities and their educational teams.

The Parent Information Network is proud to announce the release of the new *Transition Guide* for the PIN presentation: "Where am I going? How do I get there?" that will be available at the PATHWAYS Conference. The new guide designed to be interactive for students with school staff and/or parents to help develop a plan to prepare for the transition

from high school into adult life. This comprehensive, yet user friendly, guide includes everything from age of majority to budgeting worksheets. The guide also includes vocational and career school options, two- and four-year colleges, as well as local universities. Students with disabilities need to know their rights and responsibilities. The first step in self-advocacy is for the student to learn about themselves; their strengths, needs and skills. A learning style inventory is also provided with the guide to assist students with this very important information; to self-advocate, helping others learn how to support them in the workplace or school. When students are familiar with their rights it can help them to fully enjoy the postsecondary education experience without confusion or too many bumps in the road.

For more information, contact the PIN Specialist for your county or register directly online with the ADE website: www.azed.gov/onlineeregistration now open for registration.

AT Consideration in the IEP

by Teri Rademacher

When teams meet to develop or revise a child's Individualized Education Program (IEP), they are looking carefully at all aspects of his/her education. Careful consideration is given to developing goals to address the child's area(s) of need. Teams also look at the type of services that are needed (e.g., physical therapy, speech, itinerant, transportation, etc.) and record in the IEP how often services will be provided, how long they will last, what type (e.g., direct, consult) and where they will take place. One area that teams often struggle with is the "consideration of assistive technology." The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 2004 (IDEA 2004) states when developing the IEP, teams need to consider "Special Factors." IDEA 2004 states that the team needs to "consider whether the child needs assistive technology devices and services."

Consideration of the need for assistive technology just got easier. The Assistive Technology (AT) team at the Arizona Department of Education, Exceptional Student Services (ADE/ESS) has developed a form that IEP teams can use when considering the need for AT. This form lists several questions that address five areas of functioning (physical, social/emotional, cognitive, communication, and academic) and are designed to assist teams in identifying specific needs. The form can be downloaded from their website at www.ade.state.az.us/ess/at/considertemp.asp or by contacting the Parent Information Network Specialist for your county.

Assistive technology does not always mean expensive equipment. Options range from no-tech, light-tech to high-tech. For example, when looking at facilitating communication, a picture symbol system might be more appropriate than an expensive computerized device. Teams need to look at all options when considering what might be the most appropriate to address a child's particular need.

Discussion amongst the IEP team members should also include training. Does the classroom teacher and/or instructional aides need some training on how to use a particular system to facilitate communication and language development? Does the school district have trained staff members that might be available to conduct training? Should the child's parents be included in the training? The AT team at the ADE/ESS is a great resource when IEP teams have questions about process, interventions, and training. They can be reached by calling 602-364-3243.

Funding is a huge concern for schools when considering AT. For example, communication devices can cost several thousand dollars. There is a short-term loan library that schools can access. It is a joint effort between the ADE/ESS and the Arizona Technology Access Program (AzTAP). When considering a particular piece of assistive technology, it makes sense to borrow it and "road test" it with the student before spending the funds to purchase it.

Families that are clients of the Arizona Early Intervention Program (AzEIP) or of the Division of Developmental Disabilities (DDD) with the Arizona Department of Economic Security should check with their agency representative to see about funding resources that might be available. The AzEIP program has been known to fund AT devices and services that are directly related to the Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP). AT devices and services, such as wheelchairs, walkers, and communication devices, have also been funded by DDD. Accessing these resources is dependent on certain eligibility criteria so families should speak to their agency representative to discuss options.

The Parent Information Network has several documents in our Clearinghouse in the category of Assistive Technology that are terrific resources for IEP teams and families. There are 12 documents that list possible AT solutions, ranging from low-tech to high-tech, for specific areas of need (e.g., math, daily living, hearing, etc.). One of the documents provides an overview of AT including citations from the federal law, definitions of new terminology, and a suggested process for teams to utilize when considering AT for a child. These documents will be available in August on the PIN website at www.azed.gov/ess/pinspals or by calling the PIN Specialist in your county (see page 4).

Summer at Home: Tips on How to Plan Activities for Your Child with Special Needs

by Kristie Melkers

The dog days of summer are upon us and for many children, school is out. What lies ahead are days and weeks rich with

possibilities for fun, fun, and more fun. While summer camps away from home await some children, many others will be spending most of their summer break at home. For these children, parents, or caregivers will be taking on the responsibility of planning activities that will keep their children busy and happy.

Where to Begin

As you start to plan your child's summertime activities, remember that children with special needs are children first. They are more alike than different from any other child. Considering activities that brothers and sisters (or friends) are participating in is a good starting point. Just as in school, some activities may need to be changed to some degree to help your child both enjoy the activity and be successful. Did you know that just about any activity can be modified to meet the needs of children with different abilities? This may open up consideration of many different activities that you may not have realized were possible options.

Ask your child what *their* hopes and dreams are for the summer. Children often give great points of direction by spotlighting specific goals they have for fun and adventure. Some children may benefit from visual aids like a simple calendar and/or symbols that are used to represent their choices during this conversation. Other children may be able to use written or printed lists of activities where they can circle or cross out their choices. For others, just a straight-forward conversation will do. Whether a child helps in the planning process a little or a lot, children can contribute to planning their summer in some way.

Many children thrive on predictable schedules and the reassurance that structure brings to their daily activities. It is helpful to continue routines and other supportive regimens that were identified during the school year. For example, some children do best when they are able to alternate sit-down activities with "get your wiggles out" movement activities. Other children may participate in a structured project for, say, 15 minutes, followed by a break with free time. Think back to what works for your child and try to use those guidelines as you plan.

Sometimes what works in school and what works at home are not the same. If necessary, experiment a little and build in some flexibility to adjust the plans and activities as needed. This can help in determining the ideal pace and approach to different activities. In the early days, jotting down some notes to track how things are going can help provide useful information for making changes along the way.

Ideas for Summer Fun

Social activities are not only fun, but vital for children. Experiences that build family and community connections can be some of the most valuable you can offer. For families, the face-to-face time spent between children and parents will foster and deepen the bond between them. Creating, exploring, talking, taking turns, and sharing will provide many memorable moments and foster good social skills.

In the community, look for activities that take advantage of your child's strengths and interests. It is so important that a child feels comfortable and part of his or her community. It may take practice to develop or maintain skills that are needed for a child to feel confident in social settings, but there is always a starting point from which to build. Again, think back to what works and begin with that. Some children may enjoy story time at the library. Other children love to be with their buddies as they venture out to the zoo, mall, museum, or movie theater. Aim for spending the amount of time doing various activities in the community at a point that you know your child will have energy and attention to enjoy it. If you need some support while you are out and about with the kids, build that in as well. Inviting your friends, other parents and caregivers – simply bringing along another individual who can offer an extra set of hands – can be very helpful.

Physical fitness is another area of focus that your planning should address. All children can move their bodies in one way or another, and including plenty of opportunities to do so is important for their overall health and sense of well-being. Basic ideas for physical fitness activities include: romping around at the playground, backyard games, taking walks, morning stretching, etc. Dance and movement classes, karate, horseback riding, yoga, and tumbling are other options that have been successfully adapted as needed for children of different abilities. Try researching various opportunities in your area to see what is available. For children with a significant physical disability, ask your child's pediatrician or physical therapist what types of activities can be included to provide good physical benefits.

Arizona has a reputation for being a tad bit warm in the summer. Ensure that physical activity takes place at the coolest times of the day. Due to health conditions, some children simply cannot tolerate any amount of heat for long, so planning activities to occur indoors is important. Many malls open their doors to walkers early in the morning when crowds are absent. Creating an exercise regimen together at home can also be a lot of fun. Choosing music together and deciding on when and how physical fitness will occur can offer good opportunities for a child to be part of planning. Swimming is another excellent exercise for most people and can afford a cool escape from the heat. Again, let your child's strengths and interests guide you. As always, remember sunscreen, hats, and plenty of water, too!

Creative opportunities provide a wealth of fun and learning for children. Making crafts together such as building a birdhouse, creating a sculpture with paper mache, crocheting, and using a pottery wheel are great projects to start and complete together. Helping to break down each activity into individual steps is very useful for some children. Writing each step down or using a picture schedule to guide the child can help them complete the activity with some independence. Some children prefer to avoid wet, slimy materials and are more comfortable using materials like feathers, pompoms, pipe cleaners, sequins, etc. Pick whatever medium and materials your child enjoys. Coloring in coloring books together is always a good stand-by. Try baking a cake or

some other treat together. There are even recipes available that use symbols to explain the steps in the recipe for children who have trouble reading.

Learning activities that revolve around academics certainly can play a part in summertime fun. Many schools have summer reading programs encouraging children and parents to continue to read throughout the summer. Often, there are reward programs that help motivate the kids to keep reading. In every activity that you do with your child, you can create opportunities to reinforce language, counting, sequencing, and other valuable skills your child has achieved or needs to continue to develop. Taking a look at your child's IEP may give you some ideas on where to start.

With technology opening doors to endless opportunities for computer-based learning and fun, having a list of child-friendly websites at hand can be useful.

- Arizona Attorney General's Kids Page
(Internet safety, Arizona info, environment, law enforcement) www.azag.gov/ChildrensPage/index.html
- Braille Bug
(Activities for children with visual impairments)
www.braillebug.com
- Brain Pop
(Mentoring, homework, games, fun)
www.brainpopjr.com
- Discover Zone
(Educational assistance for kids, various ages)
www.discoverzone.com
- First Gov for Kids
(Arts to Space and Transportation)
www.kids.gov
- Jigzone
(Online puzzle site, adaptable difficulty and size)
www.jigzone.com
- Kids as Self-Advocates
www.ckasa.org
- Mathcats
www.mathcats.com/contents.html
- Picture Recipe Links
www.angelfire.com/pa5/as/cooking.html
- Starfall
(Animated reading and phonics site)
www.starfall.com

Here is to a fun, safe, and memorable summer! Happy planning!

Enhancing Arizona's Parent Networks (EAPN)

by Tanya Birecki

EAPN is an organization and website developed by the Arizona Department of Education, Exceptional Student Services. EAPN is the collaborative effort of parent groups, organizations and agencies that believe all children with special needs and their families should have access to information, support and training.

EAPN Goals:

- EAPN will increase access to, and availability of comprehensive and accurate information for parents and professionals.
- EAPN will provide a calendar of events throughout Arizona that addresses the interests and needs of families and professionals.
- EAPN will improve the quality of parent participation and leadership that builds effective partnerships with professionals.

The EAPN website offers links to over 50 non-profit agencies and support groups such as Raising Special Kids (RSK), Arizona Early Intervention Program (AzEIP) and Pilot Parents of Southern Arizona.

The Event Calendar, also located through their website, is an excellent way to keep current on upcoming events from month to month.

Events include family support, special education updates, advocacy training, and more. Please visit the EAPN website: www.azeapn.org or for additional information contact Tanya Birecki, EAPN Coordinator at 623-329-3089 or bbirecki@cox.net.



Name or Address Change?

Network News goes out to over 4,000 parents, service providers, and schools. We need to continuously update our mailing list to stay current. If you have any changes to your name or address, please let us know. We would also like to know if you are a parent, provider, or educator. To update your information, please contact your Regional PIN Specialist below or call 928-679-8102.

Parent Information Network (PIN) SpecialistsApache and Navajo

Jana Bays
928-537-0250
jbays@frontiernet.net

Coconino, Mohave, Yavapai

Allison Meritt
928-289-5834
merittpin@cableone.net

Pima and Santa Cruz

Kristie Melkers
520-299-1619
kmelkers@msn.com

West Maricopa

Sharon Moeller
480-288-1245
Sharonstime3@aol.com

Gila and Pinal

Interim PIN
ADE/ESS
928-679-8102

Cochise, Graham, Greenlee

Suzanne Roelike
520-398-6590
sroelike@cox.net

East Maricopa

Barb Ross
480-607-3030
barbraross@cox.net

Yuma and La Paz

Teri Rademacher
928-344-0141
trademacher@adelphia.net

For more information contact the PIN/Child Find Coordinator: Becky Raabe, (928) 679-8106, or becky.raabe@azed.gov.

The contents of this publication were compiled by Barb Ross, Contract No. ED05-0095, and Teri Rademacher, Contract No. ED06-0026-03, with funds allocated by the U.S. Department of Education under IDEA 2004. The contents do not necessarily represent the policy of the agency nor should endorsement by the Federal government be assumed. The Arizona Department of Education of the State of Arizona does not discriminate on the basis of race, religion, color, national origin, sex, disability or age in its programs, activities or in its hiring and employment practices. If you have questions or grievances related to this policy, please contact the Administrative Services DAS at 602-542-3186. This document is in the public domain and may be freely reproduced in its current format. For more information, call the Parent Information Network at 928-679-8102 or 800-352-4558.

Arizona Department of Education

Exceptional Student Services
Parent Information Network
1535 W. Jefferson St, Bin 24
Phoenix, AZ 85007 # 65678